

Greening Government Area Guidance - Section 2

Introduction

The areas in which state agencies can implement greening government practices are many and varied. From the water and energy consumed, to the solid waste generated, and the type of vehicles we drive for work, day-to-day government operations have an impact on the local, regional and even global environments. This section provides information and potential actions in five key environmental areas.

While these areas are not meant to be exhaustive of all the possible environmental and economic impacts associated with government activities, the Greening Government Steering Committee has chosen them as priority areas where impacts are significant and possible actions can be quickly implemented. The agency strategies and action steps listed in this section are meant to guide agencies, however, agencies should use their own planning process to develop additional priority actions relevant to their own activities and operations.

Each program area (energy efficiency, water conservation/quality, waste reduction and recycling, environmental preferable purchasing and transportation) is broken into four sections as follows:

1. Introduction and Background
2. Environmental and Economic Benefits
3. Existing Efforts
4. Goals, Strategies (Statewide and Agency specific), and Action Steps

Sections 1 through 3 are designed to provide background on the issues, information on the associated health and environmental impacts, and a summary of possible benefits resulting from improved performance. Section 4 consists of several components, which include:

- Statewide strategies that will help agencies in their efforts
- Agency strategies that may necessitate a change in agency policy or management practices
- Specific action steps that agency staff can use over the short term to begin implementing greening government practices quickly, often at little or no cost.

Not all of the strategies or actions listed will be appropriate for all agencies – for example, a small satellite office renting space should not focus on building energy efficiency efforts, nor should a vehicle maintenance garage focus on paper recycling. However, all agencies should at least consider each suggestion carefully to determine which ones are applicable and feasible. While each program area has its own issues and strategies, agencies should make sure to address environmental and health impacts as well as cost savings strategies in a coordinated fashion. For example, it does not make sense to eliminate one type of toxic waste only to generate another, or to promote energy

conservation at the expense of indoor air quality. All of these issues should be considered within a broader environmental and planning context.

While the list of issues and action may seem overwhelming, it is important to remember that achieving a sustainable government is a long-term goal that relies on continual improvement in how agencies conduct their day-to-day activities. Agencies should identify their most significant environmental and health impacts, examine the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of addressing these impacts, and prioritize their actions accordingly.